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ADULT BASIC EDUCATION, EVALUATION THROUGH RESEARCH.

BY- FEARCE, FRANK C.
MODESTO JUNIOR COLL., CALIF.

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THIS IS AN EVALUATION REPORT ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ADULT BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAMS AT THE NEW HOPE SCHOOL INITIATED BY MODESTO JUNIOR COLLEGE UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING ACT. EVALUATION MEASURES WERE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT (TESTED ACADEMIC PROGRESS THROUGH VARIOUS EDUCATIONAL TESTS), ATTITUDE MODIFICATION RELATIVE TO INVOLVEMENT, DROPOUT PATTERNS, FOLLOWUP INFORMATION ON EMPLOYMENT AND JOB PERSISTENCE OF TRAINEES, STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS, TEACHER CHARACTERISTICS, AND EFFECTIVENESS OF TEACHING. THE FINDINGS INDICATED THAT THE MODESTO ADULT TRAINING PROGRAMS WERE EFFECTIVE AND THAT PROGRESS WAS BEING MADE THROUGH THE ADULT BASIC PROGRAMS. (FG)

Report No. 5
General Research Findings
June, 1966

Stanislaus County Multi-occupational
Adult Training Project
MDTA New Hope School

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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Prepared by: Frank C. Pearce, Ph.D.

Adult Division, Modesto Junior College
Yosemite Junior College District
Modesto, California

ADULT BASIC EDUCATION: EVALUATION THROUGH RESEARCH

A national concern exists about "The Other America," "The Culturally Deprived," "The People of Appalachia," and "The Prairie Society." These are the people who are poor in spirit, mind and opportunity. We are told that they need education. In Stanislaus County it was found that nearly ten percent of the population over the age of twenty-five was functionally illiterate, and twenty-five percent had completed less than eight years of schooling. In fact, two-thirds of the population did not have a high school diploma. These figures, supported by other demographic data, clearly indicated the need for adult basic education and a program was initiated by Modesto Junior College to fill this need. The question before us today is, "Are we making any progress?" What evidence exists as to the effectiveness of the adult basic education program? The findings at this point in time are limited, but they do suggest some progress.

Academic Achievement

The California Achievement Test and the General Aptitude Test Battery were used to obtain some indication of academic progress. However, analysis of these tests revealed two severe limitations. First, both tests were highly dependent upon background and verbal skills. Secondly, the tests covered different material from that being covered in the classroom. Furthermore, the norms for the California Achievement Test were based on a population considerably younger than persons in the Modesto program.

Specific findings indicated:

1. The adult with less than four years of schooling could be expected to advance about one school year in four months.

2. The adult with four to nine years of schooling could be expected to advance between two and three years in four months.

3. In the area of mathematics the adult will generally advance between two and three school years in a period of four months regardless of his prior schooling.

4. Intelligence, perceptual, verbal and manual aptitudes will increase after training in basic education.

5. Normative data on the adult population being trained is needed by local programs for valid test interpretation. (Computer programming for norm development is being implemented.)

6. Students can be effectively placed into the program by grade level through use of the Graded Word List.

7. Those persons with a reading level below grade six should be given tests such as the Gates Reading Survey, the CAT, elementary level, mathematics test, and the revised BETA.

8. Adults placed at or above the sixth grade reading level should be given tests such as the CAT, junior high level, and the California Test of Mental Maturity, short form.

9. Finally, it appears that adult academic progress does not exist on a uniform plane. These adults exhibit considerable knowledge about specific areas and little, if any, knowledge about other areas. There appears to exist a considerable number of knowledge gaps.

Attitude Modification

Perhaps the most serious problem encountered in adult basic education programs is that of attitude modification. At the same time, changes in this area are the most dramatic, yet the most difficult to measure. It appears

that the most effective means of attitude modification lies within the concept of involvement. That is, the adult who becomes actively involved with his peers and members of the total community in seeking the solution to a problem begins to perceive society and his own potential in a much different manner. For example, adults in basic education exhibited the following kinds of progress:

1. Responsibility in trying to help others.
2. Increased attendance at night school.
3. Participation in community affairs.
4. Greater awareness of the need for education.
5. Fewer legal problems.
6. Improved physical being and dress.
7. Acceptance of authority figure.
8. Greater use of community services.

In essence, it appears the adult will have more confidence in his own abilities after entering the Modesto program and thus be more likely to try to help himself.

Dropouts

Adults do not have to go to school, no one will force them to attend. Therefore, an analysis of the dropouts gave some indication of progress made and improvements needed.

1. Twelve percent of the adults who entered this program dropped out before completion. That is, nearly ninety percent remained in the basic education program until they were referred out.

2. Approximately 400 students have received basic education training and 600 vocational training.

3. Usual reasons why adults drop from the program are family problems or illness. Other reasons include moving, irregular attendance, lack of interest or progress.

4. Adults who have severe drinking or psychological problems cannot be effectively handled by the basic education program.

5. Ninety percent of the persons who dropped from the vocational training program had not been enrolled in adult basic education.

Follow-Up

The Modesto Basic Education Program was designed to help undereducated and unemployed persons prepare for employment and then stay on the job. How well has this been achieved? Findings to date include:

1. Fifty-four percent were employed when the survey was conducted. Eighty-five percent had been employed at one time or another since they completed training.

2. Thirteen percent were unemployed and nine percent were not located. Illness or pregnancy were usually given as the reason for being out of the labor force when the survey was conducted.

3. Three-fourths of the adults were employed full time at an average wage of $1.62 per hour.

4. Eighty percent of these who were employed indicated that their training assisted them to obtain their present position.

5. The vast majority of the employers who responded to the questionnaire felt that the training was of value. However, the response was inadequate and a follow-up through personal interviews will be conducted.

Student Characteristics

The previous findings gain additional significance as one's understanding of the people involved increases. That is, the nature of the progress that does occur becomes more meaningful. A portion of the findings on characteristics of the adults being served by the program are:

1. Prior to entering training nearly one-half of the adults received their income from some form of public assistance.

2. Nearly one-half of the adults had never held a full time job for as long as one year prior to entering the basic education program. In fact, only one-third had held a job for as long as a year.

3. Two-thirds of the adults reported part time employment as their usual kind of employment prior to training.

4. One-half of the adults stated that they had completed eight years of school and one-fourth claimed a high school diploma. (Note: findings do not suggest eighth grade performance, in fact test results show considerably less performance). It was also found that level of education had very little relationship to the adults type or pattern of work.

5. Two-thirds of the adults reported that they quit school for financial reasons, twenty percent in order to get married or because they were pregnant, and ten percent because of trouble with school authorities or poor grades. However, apparently very few actually went to work, if indeed this was why they dropped out.

6. Three-fourths of the adults reported that only one member of their family was a wage earner.

7. It was found that there were as many women who were head of their household as were men. The same was true as to who the primary wage earner was for the family.

8. Two-thirds of the adults reported less than $3,000 dollars in annual earnings from all sources prior to entering training.

Teachers and Teaching

In order to determine the characteristics of the ideal adult basic education instructor the opinions of seven teachers, eighty-five students and two administrators were sought. These individuals were asked to describe the characteristics of a teacher that they felt were necessary in order for the teacher to perform effectively in this setting. The composite picture suggested the following characteristics were needed by a teacher in order to facilitate student progress.

Affective Domain

1. Acceptance - receiving people as they are without any prejudgment.
2. Patience - willing to try again and again despite problems and apparent adversities.
3. Humor - recognizing the ludicrous even under the most trying circumstances.
4. Honesty - conducting oneself in such a manner that others can perceive one's sincerity.
5. Sympathetic - desiring to listen and hear about the needs, wants and problems of other human beings without becoming over involved.
6. Interest - concerned about the well-being of others, in helping them to be whole people.
7. Equality - treating all people on the same basis, laying aside any personal bias.
8. Enthusiasm - projecting a feeling of confidence, of a desire to do the best possible job.

9. Stable - exhibiting a steadfast condition of emotional equilibrium in the face of continual stress.
10. Understanding - interpreting the behavior of others in such a way that the student-teacher relationship can be maintained.
11. Trust - faith and reliance on the basic truth of another's actions.
12. Firm - projecting a sense of confidence in the job at hand and an ability to carry out that job.

Cognitive Domain

1. Flexibility - responding to momentary changes in such a manner that a variety of ideas, methods and materials will be considered the standard approach to teaching.
2. Visionary - anticipating that which may occur by thinking and planning ahead.
3. Creative - striving toward the mental challenge of producing ideas and methods that may be appropriate in a new setting.
4. Experienced - presenting a practical background of many contacts in the whole of society.
5. Practical - projecting the subject in such a way that the student perceives it to be meaningful in his life context.
6. Experimental - exploring the subject for tentative solutions so that modifications can be implemented.
7. Qualified - exhibiting a mastery of the subject and the tools used to present that subject.
8. Specificity - knowing where you are going, why and what you plan to accomplish.

9. Structure - building a content of interdependent parts that will allow maximum participation toward a given goal.

It seems apparent that the Modesto program is helping adults to move ahead and open the windows of opportunity. However, this program feels that it can do an even better job, that there is always room for improvement. The evaluative research conducted at the project is one means through which modifications are carried out. In fact, descriptive and experimental research is being carried out in terms of behavioral and attitudinal changes, economic contributions to the community, validation of a testing program, curriculum, methods and materials. These and other topics will be reported at a later date. The point here and now is that there has been progress through the adult basic education program.

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